

A Publishing Controversy:

The Espionage Career of General Gehlen

One of the most complicated and controversial publishing stories of the moment centers on three books dealing with the espionage career of General Reinhardt Gehlen of Germany, Hitler's war-time chief of intelligence against Russia, who surrendered to the Americans in 1945, moving over with his archives and his agents, including ex-Gestapo and SS men, to become a top CIA strategist in the Cold War, and then, in 1956, head of the BND, West Germany's Intelligence Service, until his retirement in 1968. He lives today in Bavaria.

The books that are coming this spring involve a host of publishing houses around the world, but in the interest of simplifying matters mention will be made here largely of the American, British and German publishers.

The Three Gehlen Books

World Publishing Company, in August, for a well-publicized \$400,000, bought world rights to the official Gehlen memoirs apart from the German-language edition. It is important to emphasize, however, that the edition of the Gehlen memoirs which will be published in America by World, in England by Collins (rights went for \$96,000) and throughout the world by such houses as Mondadori in Italy (rights, \$56,000) and Presses de la Cité in France is *not* the same edition of the memoirs as was published in Germany this past October by Von Hase und Kochler Verlag. It is a considerably expanded version with additional material. World's "The Service: The Memoirs of General Reinhardt Gehlen," translated by David Irving, is now scheduled for publication in May, if 90% of the translation can be completed by mid-January.

In March Coward, McCann & Geoghegan will publish "The General Was a Spy: The Truth About General Gehlen and his Spy Ring" by the two *Der Spiegel* reporters, Heinz Hohné and Hermann Zölling, whose critical articles about Gehlen in that influential German publication are widely credited with having prompted the General to decide to tell his side of the story, although at one

time he had declared that if he ever wrote his memoirs they would not be published until 25 years after his death. This book is being published in England by Secker & Warburg and in Germany by Hoffmann und Campe. It has an introduction by Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper and the American edition will have a preface by Andrew Tully as well.

Also scheduled for March in the United States, from Random House, is "Gehlen: Spy of the Century" by the British author E.H. Cookridge, which has just been published in Britain by Hodder and Stoughton to an excellent press. The German publisher for the work is Scherzerlag. It is the Cookridge book which has been under contract as a book for the longest time, since 1967.

The fantastic power that Reinhardt Gehlen has apparently wielded in espionage around the world has long been known to experts, but to the average reader outside of Germany his name meant very little until a news story broke in the New York *Times* of September 5, reporting that Gehlen had de-

cided to tell all, that American and British publishers were being invited to Mainz to see a few chapters of his memoirs, and listing among the sensational disclosures they were to contain, the news that Martin Bormann, the Nazi leader, far from having died in the bunker with Hitler in Berlin, or being alive in South America, had long been a secret spy for the Russians inside Nazi Germany. According to Gehlen's story, as released last fall, Bormann had escaped to Russia and lived there until his death a few years ago.

Gehlen on Bormann

Ironically, it was the Martin Bormann story, which first drew attention to the Gehlen memoirs, that has caused a certain number of people to discount their credibility. According to Herbert Nagourney, head of the New York office of the book publishing division of the New York *Times*, Quadrangle Books, the *Times* had been offered the Martin Bormann chapter in German and Sidney Gruson, vice-president of the *Times*, had gone to Mainz, Germany, to see what he could of the rest of the manuscript. This was in summer, 1971. The *Times* kept pressing to see more of the manuscript and being refused (as were all the other publishers who went to Mainz). On the basis of opinions rendered by three experts at the New York *Times*, the paper reached the conclusion that the Bormann story was highly dubious. "We told them no deal, unless we see the rest of the manuscript," Mr. Nagourney told *PIW*. The *Times* had reached a decision not to bid for the Gehlen memoirs when a letter arrived from Gehlen saying that he did not want his memoirs to be published in the New York *Times*.

Peter V. Riitner, vice-president of the general publishing division of World, takes up the story next. James Wade, at that time editor-in-chief at World, had been following the Gehlen story for years. In August he got wind of the fact that the deal with the *Times* had fallen through and I went to Mainz, personally," Mr. Riitner told *PIW*, "taking with me an old friend, George Bailey, a



Wide World Photos

former American intelligence officer who can read German.

Although he saw only chapters on Martin Bormann and on Gehlen's later relations with the American CIA, Mr. Ritner says he was "satisfied there was such a thing as the Gehlen memoirs" and the \$400,000 world rights deal went through. No American paperback rights have yet been sold, although a deal with the Book-of-the-Month Club for the official Gehlen memoirs has been made. The book may not necessarily be a full selection, however. Mr. Ritner considers that World has almost made back the \$400,000 it paid out in terms of the sale of rights which have been picked up in Israel, Greece, Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, Denmark, Brazil, Sweden, Norway, Italy, France.

Loose Ends, Unanswered Questions

While all of this was being negotiated, the German edition of the Gehlen memoirs were being serialized in *Die Welt*. "We had a number of readings of them and it was clear there were loose ends and unanswered questions," Mr. Ritner told *PIW*. "We were not ready to proceed without access to the General. It turned out that the General was extremely anxious to say more in editions other than the German-language edition."

Questions were thereupon fielded to Gehlen in Bavaria from the publishers in all parts of the world who had purchased his memoirs and from intelligence sources in the United States and in Europe. It is whatever Reinhardt Gehlen is responding to these questions that will lengthen his manuscript and in Mr. Ritner's eyes make it "much fuller, longer and more controversial" than the original German-language edition.

"Gehlen," Mr. Ritner says, "is a man of deeply held beliefs. He is an unreconstructed Cold Warrior; a dedicated anti-Communist. He thinks of himself as an honest man with a need to protect Western civilization. He thinks the West has become lazy, self-indulgent, self-pitying."

The Gehlen memoirs, Mr. Ritner says, will go into detail about the predictions he made in the past that did come true, including the Bay of Pigs, which he

claims was set up so that it would fail and discredit President Kennedy. They will also contain his predictions for what lies ahead for the next 50 years or so. "He is profoundly pessimistic." As for the material on Martin Bormann, Mr. Ritner says, "there is no way for an outsider to decide one way or another."

"The General Was a Spy" by the *Der Spiegel* reporters, Heinz Hohne and Hermann Zolling (Coward, and Secker & Warburg), is a detailed, specific account of how the authors believe the Gehlen organization operated, with particular emphasis on what they consider its failures in later years. The General, according to Hohne and Zolling, was not always the mastermind he claimed to be and they comment critically on statements he made in the German edition of his memoirs. "We believe in the credentials and soundness of these investigative reporters," Jack Geoghegan of Coward, McCann & Geoghegan told *PIW*. "Hohne's book on the SS, published by us, was widely acclaimed as definitive. We do not think Gehlen can provide that kind of objectivity about himself. One wants to be sure books are analyzed in terms of their credibility and not because of some fancy price announced for rights in the press. We have seen too many examples of books for which large sums were paid not delivering the goods."

In his introduction to "The General Was a Spy," while paying full credit to Gehlen's remarkable talents, Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper writes, "In its early days the Gehlen organization certainly enjoyed some successes, which are here recorded; but from 1958 the decline in its efficiency is clear. There was a series of small failures. Then, in 1962-63 came the great failures. . . . He was allowed to serve out his time, but the legend has been destroyed and, after he had gone in 1968, a government enquiry revealed the nepotism, the scandal and the ineptitude that had thrived in a privileged private empire sustained and protected from criticism by the political conjunctions of the Cold War."

"Gehlen: Spy of the Century" by E.H. Cookridge (*Random House* and *Hodder and Stoughton*) is the product of four years of solid research, much of it based on material in the National Archives in Washington, some of which was

"privileged." Rights have also been sold in Germany, Norway, Netherlands, Italy, Spain. Mr. Cookridge, whose previous books include "Soviet Spy Net, Inside SOE" and "The Third Man" (the story of Kim Philby), also interviewed former members of the Gehlen Organization and received documentation from them.

He challenges Gehlen in a statement released in England in November, 1971, on publication of the British edition of the Cookridge book, to say whether or not he lied to CIA officials about Bormann in 1953 and 1965 or whether his entirely different claim about him made in 1971 is untrue. Mr. Cookridge ends his book, however, with the statement, "Whether we like it or not, Western democracy must be prepared in times of danger to accept such strange allies as Reinhardt Gehlen in its defense against totalitarianism."

Peter Ritner of World, summing up his own personal reaction to the power wielded by Gehlen and the CIA, puts it this way: "Who appointed Gehlen or our CIA to decide, on the basis of their philosophical background, who was going to be deported, shot, kidnapped? This kind of thing is state-subsidized thuggery and I hate it. We're lucky to know about it 20 years afterwards, but it's a bad scene."

The still unanswered question about Gehlen's own memoirs would seem to be how much he is able to reveal by West German law about his secret activities. As reported in "The General Was a Spy," after the September 5 New York *Times* story about the Gehlen memoirs broke, "Professor Horst Ehmke, Minister in the Federal Chancellery with overall authority over the BND, sent Gehlen a personal letter reminding him that even a retired head of the BND was still bound by the security regulations governing state or official secrets. In reply, Gehlen assured him that he would not violate this official ban—nor did he" (in the German-language edition of his book,—brackets *PIW*'s). A source who was at one time close to negotiations for Gehlen's memoirs told *PIW*, "We always had the feeling the CIA would read anything he wrote." Peter Ritner, on the other hand, says, "once a man like this starts talking, he cannot stop."

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